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Student mobility and internationalisation in higher education: perspectives from practitioners

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Abstract

Internationalisation is high on the agenda of higher education institutions across the world. Previous research on national and local policies surrounding this phenomenon has identified different discourses of internationalisation which may have an effect on practices such as student mobility. In order to understand better the role of student mobility in practice, the article analyses responses to an inquiry about internationalisation to a group of academic staff involved in intercultural education from universities around the world.

Informants, all members of the research network Cultnet, working at 28 different universities in 15 countries, describe internationalisation within their practice, and their understanding of the role which student mobility plays in relation to this. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews over a period of six months.

The findings locate student mobility within discourses of internationalisation. They also raise questions in relation to the need for an intercultural dialogue approach in internationalisation.

We argue that institutions and their staff should be aware of the discursive field of internationalisation in HE, take a critical stance and analyse their own role in student mobility. How mobility fits within the field of intercultural education for incoming, outgoing and ´home´ students should be highlighted and clarified in internationalisation agendas.

Keywords: student mobility, internationalisation, higher education, intercultural dialogue.

Resumen

La internacionalización ocupa mundialmente un lugar central en educación superior. En una investigación previa sobre política de internacionalización nacional y local, se identificaron tipos de discurso cuyos efectos se reflejan en la práctica, como la movilidad de estudiantes. Para comprender el papel que desempeña la movilidad, en este artículo se analizan datos obtenidos de un grupo de académicos de distintas universidades del mundo.

Los participantes, miembros de la red de investigación Cultnet, profesores de 28 universidades y 15 países, describen cómo ven la internacionalización desde su práctica y qué papel desempeña la movilidad de estudiantes. Los datos se obtuvieron mediante cuestionarios y entrevistas realizadas durante seis meses.
Los resultados sitúan la movilidad dentro de discursos de internacionalización. También suscitan interrogantes en torno a la necesidad de un enfoque de diálogo intercultural en la política de internacionalización de las instituciones.
Se argumenta que instituciones de educación superior y su personal deberían ser conscientes

del discurso de la internacionalización, adoptar una postura crítica y analizar su papel con respecto a la movilidad. Se debería subrayar y hacer evidente en las agendas de internacionalización de estas instituciones el modo en el que la movilidad de estudiantes se integra en una educación intercultural.

Palabras clave: movilidad de los estudiantes, internacionalización, educación superior, diálogo intercultural

Introduction

Internationalisation is high on the agenda of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the world but the concept is by no means an unambiguous one. Different discourses, agendas and rationales of internationalisation have been noticed by among others Knight (2004) and Stier (2006). To polarize and simplify the issue, two idealised discourses of internationalisation can be identified. On the one hand there is the neo-liberal instrumental, economic agenda. On the other hand there is the educational agenda with the aim to develop a capacity for understanding oneself and others in the spirit of intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008).

In practice there are many discourses within and between these two idealisations. The agendas are not one or the other but rather a matter of how heavily a particular discourse weighs on the scale and thus how much it influences practice in higher education. Universities exist in a market-oriented world with economic values, and competition prevails in ´the education business´. The university ranking system forces many HEIs to take on students from abroad, who pay for their education, because this not only generates income but at the same time contributes to an institution's high reputation of being an international university. The incomes, together with a well-managed economy, also enable the institution to employ/buy famous researchers who in their turn attract top colleagues. Highly valued international research leads to a highly ranked institution which is a deciding factor for many international students when choosing where to study, in a circle which might be called virtuous or vicious depending on the point of view. Readers of this article who work in higher education will doubtless be familiar with this storyline.

Our previous research on national and local policies of internationalisation in HEIs has given some examples of the dominance of an economic agenda and our argument for a different one:

> Much of the underlying motivation for internationalisation is underpinned by a desire for raising European universities' financial and/or academic position. [We] argue that it is advantageous for all to develop internationalisation policies in a creative, equal and reciprocal manner, focusing on the concept of 'intercultural dialogue' (Woodin, Lundgren & Castro, 2011, p.119).

This work was based on a document analysis of the policies of three universities in three European countries and how they related to the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008), which will be explained below. As a next step, we were curious to find out how some academic practitioners experience internationalisation in their institutions, in particular in relation to mobility. This article will therefore move from macro to micro level and consider how a specific discourse affects practice concerning student mobility and the

consequences for the individual student and her possibilities to develop into an intercultural person.

The aim of this research paper is therefore to understand the current situation of student mobility as described by an international sample of higher education practitioners. Their thoughts and concerns are addressed in relation to discourses of internationalisation and the practical implications for intercultural dialogue are considered

Background

The year 2008 was declared the Year of Intercultural Dialogue by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU). The CoE White Paper, Living together as equals in dignity, provided a conceptual framework and a guide for policymakers and practitioners:

> Intercultural dialogue is understood as a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse worldviews and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other. (CoE, 2008, p.46)

The key terms here – respect, tolerance, equality, dignity and common purpose – are part of a discourse promoting intercultural dialogue. On this basis, opportunities for developing an intercultural dialogue approach to internationalisation have been identified by Woodin, Lundgren & Castro (2011), who proposed a conceptual framework offering examples of what would need to happen in universities which wish to adopt an intercultural dialogue approach (see Table 1)

	INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE (ICD) STRATEGY	WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO MAKE ICD PRESENT IN UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES
WHAT IS THE POLICY?	An attitude A common responsibility A commitment to governmental and non-governmental bodies Personal development and transformation to promote, foster, develop for example • open and respectful exchange of views • understanding of diverse worldviews and practices • tolerance and respect for the other, equality	Commitment by university leaders to intercultural dialogue as one of their missions Preparation for incoming/outgoing staff and students Measures in place for integration of staff and students (whether temporary or permanent) Encouragement of take-up of foreign languages for all university members Preparation/training for staff in

	• commitment to human rights • social and political cohesion • engagement in wider society	working in international teams (Language/cultural issues incl. research cultures) Clear statement of Intercultural literacy as a core aim
WHY THIS POLICY?	Develop intercultural intellectuals Foster intercultural dialogue Learn to live together as equals in dignity Understanding of self and other	Devise programmes of integration of international students and staff AND home students (who also are part of the process)
HOW IS THE POLICY CARRIED OUT IN PRACTICE?	Process oriented Action oriented Participation	Require threshold of intercultural competence for all staff and students Develop materials/programmes which address the issues raised in ICD Active and critical participation of agents involved Commitment from participants

Table 1 Preliminary framework for implementing an intercultural dialogue (ICD) approach in universities (adapted from Woodin et al, 2011, p.131 – our emphasis in italics)

The framework in Table 1 (which was originally inspired by the Council of Europe, 2008 and Wächter, 2009) formed a lens through which it was possible to consider the approaches taken by the three European universities to internationalisation. It is clear from the table that mobility is central to developing an intercultural dialogue approach within universities (mobility-related actions are emphasised in italics). Closely linked to the concept of intercultural dialogue is that of intercultural citizenship, which is understood by Byram (2008) and colleagues (Alred, Byram and Fleming, 2006) as having 'action-in-the-world' as central to its meaning, and requiring of people a 'conscious commitment to values…being aware that values sometimes conflict and are differently interpreted, but being committed, as citizens in a community, to a mode of co-operation on the basis of shared aims and values' (Byram, 2008, p.190; see also Byram, Golubeva, Han and Wagner, in press). This commitment to co-operation is also central to the concept of intercultural dialogue, which necessitates communication between people (on an equal basis) in order to be realised.

Against this framework of concepts and pedagogical beliefs, and taking mobility as the core construct, in line with the focus of this special issue, this article will report on the lived experiences of mobility as described by a variety of higher education practitioners (teachers, researchers and administrators) from a range of institutions in Europe, Asia and America. It will consider their accounts of their work and their comments on mobility within the paradigms of discourses of internationalisation (defined below), and consider how far mobility can be understood as contributing to the development of intercultural dialogue.

Method and sample

Our purpose was to analyse the accounts of student mobility provided by a group of academic staff involved in intercultural education in universities. Informants, all members of the research network Cultnet, (https://cultnetworld.wordpress.com) working at 28 different universities in 15 countries, describe internationalisation within their practice, and their understanding of the role which student mobility plays in relation to this. All are practitioners in higher education and with a declared interest in intercultural education. Data were collected through two different questionnaires over a period of six months (See Appendix). 25 informants answered the first questionnaire (16 from Europe, 6 from Asia, 2 from the USA, and 1 from Latin America) and 10 (9 from the EU and 1 from Asia) replied to the second one. We have chosen not to identify the country or the university of the informant in the majority of cases, because we were not seeking to identify national differences or trends, but to understand commonality and the range of experiences as described by our informants.

The first questionnaire invited informants to give their overall understanding of the role and nature of the internationalisation process in their university. This 8-item questionnaire included open-ended questions about their opinions of how internationalisation was understood and addressed within the context of their universities and within their own practice. This gave the opportunity for them to raise issues of mobility in the context of internationalisation, and allowed the researchers to understand how mobility fitted for them into the broader context of internationalisation. By describing how internationalisation was integrated into their teaching practice, how it was used in the context of their universities, where it was more obviously addressed and which other terms were used in relation to internationalisation, informants provided information on their understanding of internationalisation and the actions taken in practice.

The second questionnaire focused in particular on the role of mobility within internationalisation where informants responded further to issues raised initially by themselves in the first questionnaire. In general, it focused on mobility, its effects and how the current situation in respondents' universities related to what respondents thought ought to be done. Respondents were encouraged to give a picture of their perspective on mobility within their institution, in the context of what they had already told us in the first questionnaire; in this way they were personalised, contextualised responses. Responses were received both by email and through face-to-face interview in relaxed surroundings.

In order to understand the role of student mobility in practice, the responses from staff members were analysed in relation with the discourses of internationalisation.

Analytic tools

Discourses have been shown to reveal underlying ideologies (Fairclough, 1992), and in relation to the concept of internationalisation Stier (2006) identified three discernable ideologies, which in turn lead to different practices: idealism (normative; internationalisation is good per se, which could be seen as an efficient way to educate the rest of the world to `learn from us´ and may reflect Western cultural imperialism); instrumentalism (a road to profit and economic growth, to educate a skilful labour force for the global market); and educationalism (which recognizes the personal and

societal value of learning itself, analysing actions and perspectives of oneself: contributes to a person´s self-understanding and stimulates meta-reflection).

Discourses have also been shown to reveal rationalisations (van Leeuwen, 2008), that is, the strategies, common practice and procedures that bind the members of society together, as a form of social organization. In relation to the concept of internationalisation, Knight (1997) identified rationales or motivations for integrating an international dimension into higher education, which she clustered into four groups: social/cultural, political, economic and academic. In a later work (Knight, 2004), in an attempt to update and re-examine the conceptual framework underpinning the notion of internationalisation, emergent rationales were identified. The new framework comprised the four existing categories of rationales and new ones, which were grouped into two levels: national and institutional. At the national level, the emergent rationales were: human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building and social/cultural development. At the institutional level, the framework included the following rationales: international branding and profile, income generation, student and staff development, strategic alliances and knowledge production.

Our analysis took into account Stier's ideologies and Knight's rationales when considering the responses made by informants.

Analysis

How internationalisation is understood

In order to identify the discourses of internationalisation underlying practitioners´ perceptions, informants were asked about how internationalisation was understood/used in their context and how they (or colleagues) integrate ideas about internationalisation into their own teaching/practice. The identified discourses revealed by ideologies (Stier, 2006) and rationales (Knight, 2004) will allow us to understand their approach of internationalisation, which will be considered in the perspective of intercultural dialogue.

All informants reported a wide range of internationalisation initiatives used in their universities, but the sample, from Europe, Asia and America, illustrates the diversity in practitioners´ perceptions and understandings of how their universities define or use internationalisation.

When asked about how internationalisation is understood at their institutions, most respondents related internationalisation to staff and student development, recruitment of international students, and institution collaborations through collaborative teaching agreements, for example: "university partnerships and exchange programs on the departmental level". Student and staff mobility as a result of teaching collaboration is viewed as one of the most common international initiatives promoted at the level of the institution.

In general, respondents made explicit an institutional underlying economic motivation to promote international activities, for example: "In the UK, my impression is that it is market-driven in the first place out of the need to tap into international students market"; "Student associations from the university can also get funding to develop

activities which target internationalisation". Thus, under the initiative of recruitment of international students at an institutional level, an economic approach to internationalisation can be discerned. One respondent from an Asian university positioned the internationalisation strategy within what Knight (2004) would term an international branding and profile rationale when referring to an attempt to attract a substantial number of international students and the brightest of scholars:

> [Our university], like many other transnational higher education institutions, claims itself as an international organization. The University has to project such an image for political reasons and it does make a huge effort to ensure that staff members are recruited internationally and the students are of diverse background.

The international profile and reputation is also found in other statements from the data as for example: "to project an image of `international excellence´ is definitely on the agenda. [Our university] has invested a lot on raising the level of `Barometer of Students Experience´, which is used for international, not national, comparison". The emphasis on high academic standards to compete internationally reveals an instrumentalism ideology of internationalisation (Stier, 2006) oriented towards economic growth and competitiveness. In other words, informants' comments reveal that the discourse surrounding their institution's internationalisation policies have a branding purpose, linked to Knight's economic category of rationales.

When informants were asked how they (or colleagues) integrate ideas about internationalisation into their own teaching/practice, they find significant gaps between institutional strategies and actions taken by their institutions for internationalisation. There is one between the strategies and the teaching and learning actions, for example: "internationalisation do[es] not seem [to] be sufficiently integrated in teaching and if so, they are often beyond the students´ level of understanding"; "internationalisation is highly recommended, however not required for the teacher programs". There is also a second kind of gap, where an informant comments that the actions are insufficiently prepared, for example: "topics that are really close to internationalisation however have not been considered thoroughly enough such as intercultural conflict, non-compatible views, interests caused by religious beliefs or simply access to the natural resources (water, oil, gas, etc.)".

An international dimension to teaching is reported by informants only when referring to diversity of learners in the classroom and in the learning of foreign languages mainly motivated by English-medium instruction: "with the incorporation of international students, the international aspect in teaching is obvious"; "teaching through English is a major issue"; "internationalisation can also be understood as a process on which students embark when learning a new language and a new culture"; "I think what we have seen so far in my institution is very much focused on the diversity (international students contribute to cultural diversity)". However, it is interesting to note that most of the informants do not mention an international dimension of this type in teaching.

On the other hand, some do refer to an international strategy more locally-oriented and not dependent on the presence of international students: "we also take measures to make the course material and pedagogy less Eurocentric and more appropriate for the local context". As one informant states, one of the compelling agendas in internationalisation is to "bring together tradition and innovation and be the bridge

between China and the world". Such statements suggest a political rationale (Knight, 2004), which is associated with national security and a nation building rationale. The local and national approach to internationalisation reflects an international development based on mutual benefits for all partners.

This curriculum-oriented perception is also found when referring to the experience of the students on the home campus, including activities that help students to develop international awareness, for example: "we distinguish between internationalisation abroad and at home. We pay special attention to internationalisation of those who will leave and gain experiences abroad and for international students coming in"; "internationalisation means to promote understanding of the world, international recognition of the university and intercultural integration in campus". Informants view the experience of internationalisation as personal and professional growth for students, for example, "our students do need the international experience both personally as well as professionally. Only in this way can they develop intercultural competence, which includes change of perspective, empathy, etc.".

The fact that some informants appear to understand internationalisation in terms of actions oriented towards intercultural integration, understanding of the world, and development of intercultural competence, reveal a social and cultural rationale (Knight, 2004).

In fine, it is noteworthy that there is an agreement in the views of the informants that the economic rationale (Knight, 2004) and instrumentalism discourse (Stier, 2006) are present in internationalisation strategies adopted by their institution, which reveals a perception of their institution far away from the commitment of an intercultural dialogue approach. However, when referring to the implementation of internationalisation in practice, the informants themselves follow an educational discourse (Stier, 2006) (cf. Knight's social/cultural rationale). This may happen because they find that learning and education values are neglected at the level of the institution, which is more focused on recruitment of students and establishing collaboration between institutions. It is found in data when informants say that in their courses and teaching practice they introduce elements oriented towards intercultural understanding, citizenship development and social and community development, for example: "in terms of teaching, at least in my courses, I encourage students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to exchange their perspectives"; "teaching pedagogy and didactics in a comparative aspect for Erasmus students"; "teaching intercultural pedagogy to intern and extern students"; "in all my classes my students carry out online intercultural exchange projects with students in other countries. I believe these projects are an important contribution to developing students´ intercultural skills and to prepare them for international mobility in the future". Practitioners perceive themselves as having a commitment to integrate into their teaching practice issues oriented towards a personal development of their students, for example through developing open and respectful exchange of views, understanding of diverse worldviews and practices and respect for the other, among others. It reveals that an intercultural dialogue approach to internationalisation is integrated, from the perspective of practitioners, into their teaching practice.

How student mobility is understood in relation to internationalisation

Student recruitment. A recurring theme from the data is the perception that student mobility is a key component in the internationalisation strategy of universities, for example: "most colleagues understand internationalisation as attracting and increasing student mobility". For some informants student mobility is viewed as a recruitment activity to attract students, for example: "the possibility for study abroad periods for the students is also used actively to recruit students to our college". Under the idea of recruitment of students seems to appear a twofold meaning: on the one hand, students from abroad facilitate the development of new perspectives for home students, on the other hand they mean economic growth for the universities, because recruitment of students provide funding to the university through tuition fees that international students have to pay. The latter way of understanding reveals an instrumentalism discourse of internationalisation (Stier, 2006). However, this conception of student mobility as recruitment is critically questioned by informants themselves, for example: "Erasmus students are another form of internationalisation, but there is little linkage between recruitment and service or provision in terms of developing intercultural exchange and awareness among all students". Such criticism is grounded in an educationalism discourse (Stier, 2006).

Diversity and internationalisation through mobility. Recruitment of students can mean a contribution to diversity; multicultural classrooms in universities strengthen the incorporation of international students. It is also possible to find an educationalism discourse at institutional level too, for example: "I think what we have seen so far in my institution is very much focused on the diversity – international students contribute to cultural diversity". In this regard, diversity and internationalisation are viewed as closely connected, for example: "to promote awareness of diversity and internationalisation". For some informants, diversity is the result of student mobility but also contributes to generate income and economic resources for the institution, and as Knight (2004) notes, different rationales can be found simultaneously; here a social and cultural and an economic. In the following example the social and cultural is formulated in terms of intercultural competence and the economic is seen as a rationale for the student rather than the institution and its budget: "Our students do need the international experience both personally as well as professionally. Only in this way can they develop intercultural competence, which includes change of perspective, empathy, etc." Practitioners thus clearly also have an awareness of a labour market argument about student mobility and the need for their students to flourish in a global world. However they do not see this as the central reason for mobility, for international experience is viewed as "an added value, similar to a cosmopolitan value that students need to pursue in order to become competitive in the market".

In many societies, there are already multicultural classrooms due to the make-up of the society itself, but student mobility is also considered to contribute to multicultural classrooms, and this then adds an international dimension to teaching, for example: "with the incorporation of international students, the international aspect in teaching is obvious". This phenomenon is particularly noted in some specific courses: "something that is used actively in some language courses". Some informants also argue that the presence of incoming students on campus promotes campus-based activities that contribute to increase the range of students´ experiences, for example: "there are several programmes addressed to incoming exchange students, such as orientation camps, service to the community; besides there is a Summer School

addressed mainly to foreign students". The extension of the academic horizon of the students reveals an **'**academic rationale**'** (Knight, 2004) of internationalisation.

Integration and inclusion of mobile students. While the majority of informants had a respectful vision of diversity that is developed through the increasing presence of incoming students, they, at the same time, challenged the current discourse of inclusiveness associated with mobility, finding that what is missing is the engagement of international students with the community. According to one informant there are "a large number of students from other countries on campus. However, they seem to just study here, they don´t participate much in campus (or internationalisation) activities". There is a perception of a lack of an inclusion policy on the part of institutions to encourage the contribution of international students to the development of the community.. That could be implemented through the promotion of an active and critical participation of agents involved. For example one informant stated: "We need to create more awareness about the importance of incoming students. Some professors might not even notice that they have international students in their classes. A program preparing staff for student mobility does not yet exist. This relies pretty much on personal involvement and motivation". In this regard, some informants show a disposition towards positioning student mobility within a social/cultural rationale of internationalisation, which is lacking in the practice of institutions and some of their colleagues.

The lack of integration of mobile students was described by informants in a range of ways. Firstly, the students themselves are not systematically integrated into the 'home' context. In some cases (as in a UK university) this might be because the university is in fact a multicultural and multilingual space in itself, due to the character of contemporary British society. International students were arriving to the UK expecting a white British Christian student body, and yet they found a highly multicultural/multilingual space which reflected the particular city's multifaith population. Other informants reported that incoming students are not offered opportunities for mixing with home students because of the recruitment policy. For example the preponderance of Chinese students on one Masters' programme meant that their classroom was hardly multicultural and they did not have the opportunity for an intercultural experience.

This kind of situation is exacerbated by the lack of consistent support for incoming or outgoing students – or indeed home students – in terms of workshops and/or training, which go deeper than orientation or information on culture shock. It was common for respondents to state that they would like to see such developments, such as "a course that teaches intercultural communication, critical cultural awareness, reflexivity in terms of how difficult it can be for students to comprehend different study habits, lecturer/student relationship". Another respondent recommended "integration of student mobility as part of study and part of internationalisation, and not as a separate unit". Taking this issue into consideration and as an implication of intercultural dialogue, universities could devise programmes of integration of international students and staff and home students who are also part of the process.

Mobility is, in short, not systematically integrated into students' curriculum, and informants say that it is generally seen as something which is desirable (often just for

some students) rather than essential. Initiatives relating to integration and inclusion would signify the greater development of an intercultural dialogue approach.

Integration of activities across university campuses is another area which informants found problematic; staff teaching international students and those responsible for sending students on mobility activities seem (with one exception) to have little communication: "there is also (usually) a presentation [for incoming mobile students] in which the university/faculty is introduced… there is an office but I don't know how prepared and helpful the staff are".

It would seem, then, that the activities surrounding internationalisation are operating in individual silos with efforts from one group having little impact or effect on others working even with the same students. In many cases there is clear commitment and passion for the job which they are doing, but the effect of this remains largely within the confines of the spaces in which they are working, for example: "There is a whole office or unit which is working with international relations and I don't really have any contact with them'.

That is not to say that there are no examples of integration activities. For example, one informant described a "host family scheme", and there was an example of pairing of home and international students in a one university, but these activities were described by informants as largely independently developed by teachers, as opposed to integrated parts of the curriculum with justifications in their own educational terms. As one informant stated "I have to work hard when managing the global award to develop the idea that intercultural communication is about an international/intercultural mindset across the campus".

Students´ preparation for mobility. Informants involved in face-to-face teaching of students were strongly aware of the fact that mobility activity is often described in terms of numbers of students taking part in international exchanges, as described above. A recurring theme was the lack of preparation for visits abroad: "incoming students get a one-day course in culture general issues, and also culture specific knowledge about the host country. Out-going students do not have the same offer". In two instances there was a home student mentor system for incoming Erasmus students, and in one case students were offered 'host' families but not all incoming students had mentors.

Collaboration with the administration of mobility was not always evident, apart from one case. Some informants mentioned an office which dealt with mobility exchanges, and some even stated they had no idea where that office was on their university campus, for example: "very often the international office is located in an administrative building and information will not necessarily flow from administration to the departments". Only one respondent from the ten answering the second questionnaire had significant links with the international office in their university. He is responsible for the university Global Award, referred to in a quote in the previous section, (an extra-curricular award which recognised global understanding and experience), and this brought his work more closely together with the international office, including supporting their work on designing preparation workshops for students. One informant stated that while there was the opportunity in her institution for preparation, it should be compulsory. Another informant proposed modules

covering literary texts with examples of cultural gaps and role models, ethnographic methods, and intercultural knowledge grounded in experience. Both culture-general and culture-specific focuses were considered important by a second, and another suggested "to help students to carry out really small scale projects. Not culture related to country and nationality but like encountering subcultures and how you can work with that". There was also a suggestion that students needed "support in understanding culture shock reactions". While there were some preparatory workshops in some institutions for outgoing students, and there was an open door for student to ask questions in others, in yet others there was nothing at all. One institution offered a six-month co-studying programme for home and incoming trainee teachers. The range of possibilities could probably be extended to suit each individual context, but, given the responses, it is clear that there is currently no coherent framework for offering both pre- and post – as well as during – preparation and support. One informant commented on the fact that while preparation for going abroad was in place, the "mobility has to be implemented as an integral part of the study program". Certainly this would be needed if mobility activities were to contribute to an intercultural dialogue approach as described earlier.

Support and preparation for staff. With regard to preparation for staff, the verdict was unanimous: there is none. Where staff arranged their own preparation, this was largely for those directly involved in the mobility programme or support for administrative staff. One informant said that staff are encouraged to apply and participate in mobility and international research-related activities, but funding was not forthcoming and bureaucracy in channelling funds from EU mobility grants meant that staff ended up paying for themselves. Others mentioned also the personal commitment from staff which was not supported by their institution whether financially or in terms of training or time allocation. One informant noted the need for preparation of staff working in international research teams, noting that for them, mobility, language and cultural issues are also important.

There was a range of different opinions among the informants in relation to what should be offered in terms of support for mobility. One stated that "professors in charge of partner university programs should receive a list with all the names of incoming students and personally welcome them. Furthermore they should be assisted in their work, e. g. by internationalisation tutors". Another made a list of recommendations, including: "financial support, time for preparation and dissemination of knowledge...integration of student mobility as part of the study and part of internationalisation not as a separate unit; and student mobility and internationalisation need more integration within curriculum requirements". A third noted the difficulties the teachers have in managing large groups of international students: "a colleague has got 42 … students [from one country] on her course of 60 students and my colleague is finding it very hard to teach and it is a problem felt by colleagues – there is no teaching and learning support".

The issue of English language dominance was problematic for one informant. All teachers at the university had been asked to take an English test to show they were at least C1 level (of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages) , which eventually was withdrawn because of staff resistance. It was also noted that the European Union had removed the requirement for international students to learn the local language. As an implication of the intercultural dialogue strategy,

universities should encourage a take-up of foreign languages for all university members.

The effects of mobility. There was a range of reporting on the effects of mobility on home staff and students. It is recognised that "first-hand experience of otherness" helps students. In relation to home students coming into contact with visiting mobile students in classes, one informant said, for example: "I can sense some more opening up and acceptance than before". In another institution it was noted that courses were being developed in English as opposed to the native language of the country, this was becoming "a huge political question".

With regards to effects on home students, it was noted in one case how home students preferred to work with other home students because they were unsure of the level of linguistic proficiency of the international students. The question of the level of the language of instruction was also mentioned by one informant when talking about other teachers who were frustrated by the lack of clarity of communication in international students' assignments. Some mentioned there were opportunities for developing much greater effects on home students than currently but others said they weren't sure or that there were no effects of international students on home students. Another stated that the presence of international students in the class can make or break the class: "sometimes they accept it and sometimes they don't".

As for the effects of travel abroad, one tutor accompanied a group of Hong Kong students to Spain, and found the students came back full of stereotypes: "…they might as well not have gone…they had fun and visited another country but that was it, it was just a holiday…we're supposed to be promoting learning about other cultures…I think it is actually doing the opposite-it's just reinforcing other cultures".

It is worth noting that these concerns of informants about the effects of mobility, the need for preparation and so on – are not all easily categorised in the discourse types identified by Stier or Knight. This is a symptom of the concern in research hitherto which has largely focused on the institutional level and policy analysis. There is clearly a need for more enquiry into how the discourses of experiences of those directly involved are shaped in relation to the policy rationales and ideologies. What we have done here is simply a beginning.

Conclusion

At the start of this article, we articulated our aim as: to understand the current situation of student mobility as described by education practitioners. Our approach has been through an analysis of the responses from our informants, practitioners in HEIs, in order to identify discourses of internationalisation and intercultural dialogue in their perspectives. We recognise that the perspectives of informants do not necessarily concur with the aims or perspectives of institutions at the strategic level. This current paper is not seeking to provide 'truths' about institutional mobility strategies, but to understand how mobility is understood by staff most closely involved with the affected students.

With regard to discourses of internationalisation, ideologies and rationales at institutional level, the data reveal that student mobility is positioned mainly within an

instrumental ideology and an economic rationale. Informants perceive the institution as prioritizing increasing student numbers for economic motives. An attention to the content and the quality of international learning and experience is not addressed in programs and courses at institutional level. A number of informants have tried to counteract this lack of attention by integrating those aspects into their teaching practice, thus positioning student mobility within an educationalist ideology and socio/cultural rationale.

With regard to intercultural dialogue, it is clear that our informants believe that, while some students and dedicated staff are strongly motivated to cultivate such an approach, there is little in terms of structures and support to enable this to be a vision for all within HEIs. It has been suggested previously (Wächter, 2009; Bone, 2008; Ganesh & Holmes, 2011; Woodin et al, 2011) that an intercultural dialogue approach to internationalisation could lead to something more than instrumentalism. Earlier in this article we highlighted aspects of internationalisation policies and practice which could contribute to such an approach (see Table 1), as follows:

- Preparation for incoming/outgoing staff and students
- Measures in place for integration of staff and students (whether temporary or permanent)
- Preparation/training for staff in working in international teams (Language/cultural issues incl. research cultures)
- Devise programmes of integration of international students and staff AND home students (who also are part of the process)
- Require threshold of intercultural competence for all staff and students
- Develop materials/programmes which address the issues raised in ICD
- Active and critical participation of agents involved
- Commitment from participants

The informants have stated that they think that in their institutions, these areas have not yet been implemented into institutional policies in a systematic and explicit manner. The recommendations by the Council of Europe (2008) and Wächter (2009) about what needs to happen to make Intercultural Dialogue present in university strategies should be highlighted. It has been noted that intercultural dialogue is an impossibility in many places in the world, where equality between those involved cannot be achieved, such as conflict zones (Phipps, 2014, Holmes, 2014). This highlights an even greater need for developing dialogic spaces where they are indeed possible, such as higher education institutions.

We should not forget the efforts of individuals in our sample who go to extraordinary lengths to develop programmes and people with an intercultural dialogue approach, but without the support of universities from the top, this cannot achieve its full potential. Wächter (2009) argues that there is a need for a threshold of intercultural competence for all staff and students, and Woodin et al. (2011) argue that a number-counting of mobile students coming in and out of universities is not going to contribute to an educationalist approach to internationalisation and in particular to mobility, unless an intercultural dialogue approach is developed in the internationalisation strategy of HEIs.

A number of recurring themes came through the data from the questionnaires, most notable was the lack of activity supporting and integrating the mobility ‘in’ and ‘out’

visits. This was in relation not only to student mobility but also that of staff, and 'home' students.

The lack of preparation for students and in particular for staff is obvious. The informants have many suggestions of what could indeed be offered. We recognise the work of scholars such as Byram, (1997, 2008) Barrett et al (2014) as opportunities ripe for development of a more integrated approach to mobility which in our view could transform it from an economic activity into an educational one. Recent work within the IEREST project "Intercultural Educational Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers" (http://www.ierest-project.eu) has been undertaken, which is presented in this special issue. For example, an empirical study by Holmes et al (2016, abstract) shows ´how a structured intercultural communication programme, underpinned by experiential learning, encouraged mobile students to i) explore the concept of "interculturality"; ii) promote their intercultural engagement/communication during their stay abroad; and iii) encourage them to reflect on their own (developing) interculturality´. Within this project, an analysis of Erasmus students´ reactions to the implementation of teaching modules dealing with intercultural issues reveals that the approach that seems to meet the students´ expectation is the cross-cultural or neo-essentialist, while the intercultural or critical cosmopolitan learning approach appears to have a more favourable impact on students (Čebron et al., 2016).

This is not to say that mobility does not already offer those involved an enriching, life-changing and transformative experience. There are, however, clear opportunities which are currently being missed with regards to understanding and integrating mobility experiences in a way which can address the claim that it is (in the case of European ERASMUS programmes) 'one of the greatest culture and character building programs that you can have in your whole life' (http://www.erasmusprogramme.com/). If, as Coleman (2013) reminds us, the residence abroad can be influential and life-changing throughout a person's life long after the experience itself, how much more could it do with a commitment to more than just the experience itself?

It is also clear that collaboration between concerned parties within the university (such as teaching departments and Erasmus administration) is largely non-existent. The informants did not have a clearly discernible response to questions about the effects of mobility on staff and students, and it would seem that beyond the exchange experience itself, little is done to either integrate, reflect upon, or develop mobility activities into a meaningful and transformative experience for all involved.

Final remarks

It is not difficult, given the current situation, to make recommendations. The European Union, together with other mobility programmes world-wide, spends a large amount of money on mobility projects, as do universities and their staff, who in addition demonstrate much personal commitment. We question how well this money is being spent if there is little requirement for an integrated intercultural approach. The examples cited above bear witness to the need for an insistence on mobility as a core feature of today's higher education experience, but the days of expecting that cultural encounters automatically lead to intercultural competence are surely long gone. Allport pointed out the fallacy of a simplistic 'contact hypothesis' many years

ago in his The Nature of Prejudice (1954); we question how far university policies have moved in concrete recognition of this 60 years later.

Even if this study cannot be generalized, the impressive unanimity in perspective from our informants with regard to the value of greater integration and training/development for both staff and students in relation to mobility is evidence of recognition of the opportunities which are currently being missed. As one informant suggested, it could be of great use to introduce a requirement for new staff to undertake a course in intercultural competence on securing work in a university.

Some informants noted, and it is our view as authors, that there is a clear mismatch between what is said and what is done. What is said often comes from the official documents which themselves often come from the 'top' of a university's power tree. As stated by one informant, when internationalisation (and within that, the mobility agenda), is articulated at top level it becomes more of an operational plan; it is not a pedagogic, philosophical position. While there are individual tutors teaching intercultural courses, the top-down vision is different; it is all about international standing. The incompatibility of these goals has not been proven, and it is also our view that the power-holders in a university which realises its intercultural potential in the educational, long-term sense are likely to find it will develop into a world-leading university as a consequence. They too will then raise questions in relation to discussing the need for an intercultural dialogue approach in internationalisation.

Finally, we would recommend institutions and their staff to bring to the surface the discursive fields of internationalisation in higher education in their internal debate on local policy, take a critical stance and analyse their own role in student mobility. How mobility pedagogically fits within the field of intercultural education for incoming, outgoing and ´home´ students should be highlighted and clarified in internationalisation policy documents and its practical implementation in relation to intercultural dialogue.

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Add the two articles from Prue and Irina and colleagues once we have the titles

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Appendix 1

Internationalisation questionnaire 1

We are investigating what internationalisation means in higher education institutions. Our preliminary research questions are

- How is internationalisation being used/understood in international higher Education contexts?
- •Who has the power to decide? (how is the dominant understanding arrived at?)
- •What alternatives are there/would you like to see?
- •What might be more urgent/compelling than this agenda in higher education in your context?

It would be a great help for our research to know about your institution. Your participation will be anonymous

About you
In which university are you based?

what is your email address? *

Please tell us about your role(s)/interest(s) in internationalisation *
to help us understand your perspective

How is internationalisation being used/understood in your higher Education contexts? *
you can tell us for example if it is used in staff development, or in mission statements, or if there is a definition of internationalisation which is being used in information to staff/students/ public or policy documents

How do you (or your colleagues) integrate ideas about internationalisation into your own teaching/practice in your institution? *
Please give examples; this could be from any of your institutional roles, or those of your colleagues

Are there some parts/sections/departments of your institution where internationalisation is more obvious/prevalent /explicitly addressed? *

How far would you say that internationalisation is seen as a finite activity in your institution as opposed to a process? *
E.g. do people talk of having completed the internationalisation of a curriculum, or is it more of an ongoing process? Please give examples where possible

Are there any other key terms which are being used in relation to internationalisation? *
you can cite terms which you have often heard or seen used in the context of internationalisation, or which you associate with internationalisation in relation to your work.

What competing/other compelling agendas are there in your higher education context at the moment?
it may be that internationalisation is not very important right now in your higher education context. Please tell us what issues/terms/concepts are important right now in your workplace.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us in relation to internationalisation?
Please tell us anything else you think is relevant

Would you be happy to take part in a future questionnaire/skype conversation? *

- yes
- no

Thank you for your help.

Appendix 2

Internationalisation questionnaire 2

Thank you for agreeing to take part in further questions for us. We would like to ask you the following questions. Please either reply by email or let us know if you prefer skype/recorded conversation- whichever is easier for you is fine with us.
Please answer in relation to what you have already told us

1a) For the internationalisation of HE, what do you think institutions should offer to prepare students for mobility?

1b) What do you think staff/teachers should be offered in preparation of receiving mobile students?

2a) How far is such an offer available in your institution? What is actually done in relation to student mobility?

2b) What is actually done in relation to preparing staff for student mobility?

3a) What is your experience of the effects of student mobility on 'home' students?

3b) What is your experience of the effects of student mobility on 'home' staff?

4) (PERSONALISE THIS QUESTION) How important do you feel the question of mobility is in relation to the bigger picture of internationalisation in your institution (make reference to how they have responded in their questionnaire?) – prompt with for e.g. what kind of/or how much emphasis is given to mobility and its effects within your HE institution in relation to other elements of internatIonalisation?